

Subject: Press Conference of TARSIS Valeriy in Rome Italy.

Source: ~~in [redacted]~~ *Almanach 7/54*

Date: 27 April 1968

1. The press conference of Tarsis, Valeriy took place on the 27 April 1968 in the Auditor Nazionale in Rome Italy. It was sponsored by the Italian Cultural Society and by the publisher Rizzoli. At the conference people holding invitations were admitted, Source, although having no invitation was admitted as a member of the press. The conference opened with Tarsis reading (in Italian) a short speech on the topic of "Russian Writers today". Afterwards he replied to questions from the floor.
2. Experience showed Tarsis that as a writer he was always involved with the police, nevertheless, the brutality of the regime cannot kill a person's creative talents. During his interrogation by a SATYNSKY (?) fnu Tarsis was told, after saying that he only wrote the truth about life in the USSR, that "for our party the truth is not important, it does not help us in achieving communism". Tarsis then stated that for him, a writer is a person who writes only the truth. Socialist Realism according to Subject is neither Socialist, nor Realism, only literary dictatorship. In the USSR a person who refuses to kneel before the leadership is liquidated. Statements that there are no more concentration camps are outright lies. SATYNSKY also told police: "You say there are no concentration camps in the USSR, then where will you send me?"
3. Tarsis went on to say that in the Writers Union of the USSR there are 6,000 members. Tarsis organized a Union of anti-regime writers numbering 200 members called SMOG (which stands for Courage, Thought, Image and Persistence) There are members of SMOG in thirty different cities of the USSR among them Luga. Recently the members of SMOG published a manifest which begins "Great Russian nation..." The free world helps these writers by publishing the journals "Feniks", "Avangard" and "Sprinks" in West Germany. The regime combats these writers by sending them to insane asylums. Many members of SMOG are children of high party officials, who have broken ties with their parents.

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4. The opposition is not an underground organization. The people are free culturally, politically, and certain circles such as students and intellectuals are not afraid to oppose the government. This opposition began with Pasternak. Today the regime is weak, and all that is left is to watch its downfall. Although the opposition is small in membership, it is composed of highly talented people. According to Tarsis the opposition has been successful in some ways. In April 1965 students and intellectuals staged a demonstration in Moscow where there were present 450 people. They marched to the monument of Mayakovsky and shouted "Away with the proscription of Socialist Realism". The police broke up the demonstration and arrested 17 persons. A trial was held within 5 days, and the arrested were sentenced for 10 days "re-education", the charge being "obstruction of government". Such actions just show the weakness of the regime, according to Tarsis. Active in the opposition are also army officers.

5. In reply to a question by Dr. Markus about the role of non-Russian peoples in anti-Soviet actions. Tarsis said that the opposition in the Union Republics was even greater than in Russia itself. He gave an example which he heard from his sister in TIFLIS. Last year on May day there was a demonstration where people threw stones at portraits of Party leaders for two hours. While two years ago there was a real uprising in Tiflis. In Ukraine, the Ukrainians have their own organizations.

6. Within the party there are two separate groups. One is led by Sholepin and Suslov, the other by Kosigin and Mazurov. The sympathies of the army is unknown. Tarsis does not discount the possibility of a civil war in the near future. When asked by deputy Pacciardi why he was allowed to leave the USSR, Tarsis replied that the government was anxious to get rid of him, since many young people were followers of his. The leadership of the party was divided on how to act towards him. Sholepin and his followers wanted Tarsis shot, while Kosigin's group was against this method, saying that it was unhelpful. Also on Tarsis' side was the British ambassador. The final decision was reached to permit Tarsis to travel, and the time was made to

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concern with the trial of SINYAVSKI and DANIEL, so as to soothe public opinion in the West.

7. Russians worth believe in God, and even take an interest in the ecumenical movement. He (Tarsis) is presently writing a book about Christianity and how to have a Gospel audience. The present situation of the church in Russia is very difficult. High church posts are held by members of the KGB, thus showing that in reality the church is not free, as it is made out to be by the state. Forest priests are arrested and deported, as recently happened to a father KOSYKOV from Moscow who was sent to Siberia. According to Tarsis, Communism is not strong enough to solve social problems. In conversations with young Russian writers, the only alternative offered to Communism was religion. In a true democracy people should base their relations on the saying "man should love his fellow man".

8. Other statements made by Tarsis at conference:

"The Communist regime is nothing other than socialist fascism"

"In-human, and anti-humane is the basis of communism".

SINYAVSKI and DANIEL rejected the charges put before them"

"Foreign criticism on the part of public opinion in the West angers the Soviet leaders".

"He called 'liberals' as EVARDOVSKI and others have already made their name in the regime, and become well lived work and file workers"

"It was I, who brought up these young poets"

"With the help of the Free World, the Russian people will gain their freedom".

"Communism is basically a false teaching," in discussion with young people, Tarsis always remarked: "Philosophy is the love of truth, while communism is the love of idiocy"

In reply to a question if the USSR will prolong its policy of co-existence with the West, Tarsis said that policy changes from day to day. Once there is more freedom, then arrests take place. The people know that they are slaves, and want to depose of the regime.

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"The world is an anti-human system. Lenin said 120 years ago that another revolution is needed to erase the wrongs committed by the communist revolution".

"In Moscow there were long lines of people waiting to buy sandwiches, a party member came and told them 'citizens, although we have no sandwiches, we have some products'".

"Some of the students in the USSR can read works of non-Marxist philosophers, Lenin said no, and that many students came to his home to borrow books and to be such".

"Only communist newspapers are allowed into the USSR. Works of Western authors are falsified grossly". Lارسis remembers that one work which he translated had 120 falsified pages.

In answer to a question if the wider masses wanted a democratic system, Lارسis said that in secret conversations the matter of a new constitution, a new government, wider democracy, autonomy for every nation in a federation was discussed.

9. Lارسis tried to do an act against oppression but was not successful. Lارسis said he however told Source that he will soon travel to the USA for a series of conferences, return to Italy and live there permanently.